

Talbot County Economic Development Commission
215 Bay Street, Suite 5
Easton, MD
August 7, 2014 Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Chairman, Ted Bautz, Peter Dunbar, Haim Loran, Debbie Renshaw, Walter Chase, Gerry O'Mara and Kelley Malone

Ex Officio Members Present: Al Silverstein and Timothy Jones

Members Excused: Vice-Chairman, Geoff Oxnam and John General

Attendees: Scott Warner, Laura Heikes, Kimberly Weller and Tracy Ward

Guest Speaker: Tracy Ward, Executive Director of the Easton Economic Development Corporation (EEDC), outlined the EEDC's projects and vision in a power point presentation. The EEDC, which began a year ago, hit the ground running with a big concern about the sluggish economy (the economy shrank 3% on the Eastern Shore last year). She referenced one of the recommendations in the Talbot County and Towns Strategic Plan to create a private/public organization to leverage more assets for economic development as a foundation for establishing the development corporation. Ms. Ward informed the committee of her background and experience and outlined four priority projects for the EEDC: the Eastern Shore Food Hub, the redevelopment of Port Street; establishing an Innovation Center (an accelerator/co-working business incubator); and infill development. Ms. Ward answered questions from the committee.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 8:26 a.m. by Chairman Ted Bautz, in Conference Room 1, located at 215 Bay Street, Suite 5, Easton, MD 21601. A quorum was present.

Agenda and Minutes: The agenda for the August 7th commission meeting was approved. The draft meeting minutes from the June 5th commission meeting was approved.

Correspondence: The director reported that correspondence from the County Council was received acknowledging and appointing Kelley Malone and Deborah Renshaw, as well as reappointing Ted Bautz and Walter Chase, to the commission for terms coming due. Chairman Bautz reminded the committee that there is a vacancy, from Susan Hayward's seat, and asked that nominations be provided to Ms. Bethke to begin the process of appointment.

Old Business: The director reported that the Council held a working session with the towns as part of their regular agenda and a presentation on broadband availability to our communities by the Maryland Broadband Cooperative was well received. The Talbot County Real Property Tax Credit will be presented for public hearing at the County Council's August 12th meeting. This approval will provide for the creation of a fund in the FY 16 budget to incent economic development projects that meet the criteria. An additional proposal from the Planning Commission will be presented to increase the square footage requirement for commercial buildings without requiring Site Plan approval. Mr. Silverstein indicated that he attended the Planning Commission and the recommendation was to increase the square footage from 300 to 2,500 or 25%, whichever is greater

with decisions at the discretion of the county planning officer. The EDC comes before the County Council on August 26th for a their quarterly work session. Mr. Silverstein indicated that August 26th is the same date as the Chamber of Commerce's Awards Dinner. Mr. Silverstein asked if there was a possibility to get a meeting extension. Ms. Bethke indicated she would work to reschedule the work session.

New Business:

The director attended the Maryland Smart Growth Commission meeting in Easton where a draft report of recommendations was reviewed. A copy was sent to the EDC for their review. The statewide agenda supports future growth and development initiatives for the future governor.

The MEDA Conference is scheduled October 26th and 27th to be held at Rocky Gap, Maryland with a meeting on manufacturing. The director attended a "Made in America" hosted by Congressman Hoyer announcing 12 new proposals to strengthen the manufacturing industry in America. Additional information is available at the EDO.

Maryland Innovation Week will be held statewide the week of September 15th with events taking place in Easton on September 16th in collaboration with the EEDC and the ESEC. The Maryland Startup Bus will be at the Easton Library on September 16th and an additive manufacturing workshop with 3D printing technology is planned for the afternoon.

The director reviewed programs available for assistance with Brownfield reclamation. Properties for redevelopment have an additional cost and burden in preparing the land for development. The programs provide for certification of sites and possible reclamation funds with the municipal or county participation. The director offered to provide information about the Brownfield's Reclamation Incentive Program and to place the topic on the EDC September agenda as a possible recommendation to the County Council. Mr. Bautz asked the commission if the towns have an inventory of their brownfields. Part of the problem is, we do not know if we have a brownfield until after an assessment.

Business Environment Committee: The BE Committee discussed holding a forum for the business community to share information on improvements that have been made to the town and county permitting processes and to provide an update on the Comprehensive Plan process. The committee proposed the EDC host the Development Forum event on September 17th at the Talbot County Community Center from 7:00 – 9:00 a.m. A proposed agenda was shared with the EDC who then approved the event. Ms. Renshaw reported that there are conflicting requirements, that the livability codes and the building codes are not coordinated and this discrepancy should be addressed. Motion for the EDC to host a development forum was unanimously approved.

Marketing Committee: Haim Loran, Chairman: reported that he had a meeting with Mayor Willey regarding town and county cooperation. He and the director visited Washington Labs to learn more about the requirements to target testing labs for attraction to Talbot County. The Marketing Committee has developed a one-page survey for the business community to determine their input on the community and the business environment. The survey has been posted and emailed to 400 contacts with 52 responses. Mr. Loran and the committee will try to contact those

who did not respond to the survey by telephone. Mr. Loran indicated that the 52 responses did not reflect the total 400 that were mailed. Some of the respondents requested a meeting from the EDO and members of the Marketing Committee who have scheduled follow up visits. Chairman Bautz indicated that people have approached him on the street and expressed that they were appreciative to receive the survey, that finally they are being included. The director reported that Jeanne Haddaway took Erik Neil's position on the Marketing Committee. Another initiative, in addition to attracting businesses, is to work on a county-wide brand. The tourism director, Cassandra Vanhooser, has been invited to also participate with the Marketing Committee in developing a county marketing brand.

Chairman's Report: Ted Bautz reported that in the last 3-4 years there has been little interest in the purchase of commercial property in the towns and not much development. In the last 3 weeks, there has been an increase in inquiries regarding available land. This may have to do with the changes of the impact fees, the approach to manufacturers, and the elimination of the personal property tax in the town.

Director's Report: The director reported three existing companies are discussing expansions and two annexation projects to the town of Easton. Several retention visits were made to area businesses. The World Class Consortium is forming a LEAN Peer Group on the Eastern Shore for those interested in improving production efficiency and organization growth. The director participated in meetings with MACo and MML in Annapolis to review incentive programs for greater availability and impact. The EDO toured Poplar Island with a group of 18 including the new Cooperative Oxford Lab Director, Suzanne Skelley. Ms. Malone expressed that the number of government entities involved and the organization struck her. The second Poplar Island Tour will be offered September 11th with guests including the CBMM Director and the UM MIPS Business Representative. The Maryland Association of Counties (MACO) Annual Meeting will be in Ocean City August 13th through August 16th and the director plans to attend. The Maryland Economic Development Association (MEDA) Fall Conference is focusing on manufacturing and will be held at Rocky Gap on October 26th/27th. The director, along with Tracy Ward and Mike Thielke, met with the Chesapeake Regional Tech Council (CRTC) to discuss plans to bring a Meetup to Easton October 16th at the Tidewater Inn for tech sector members.

Walter Chase, Town of Trappe: Mr. Chase reported that the Trappe Commission approved Nason's Park concept plan. Trappe had problems with drainage on Sullivan Drive, and infrastructure problems on Main Street. Last month there was a meeting with the business owners who expressed some of their concerns. Trappe is still working with The State Highway Administration (SHA) on posting a welcome sign on Route 50 that will list their businesses. **Al Silverstein, Chamber of Commerce:** reported Chesapeake Bay Outfitters, in St. Michaels, has been sold; the ribbon cutting date for Quality Health Strategies is September 9th; Dick's Sporting Goods is going up; a lot of people from Kent Island are calling regarding the status of Harris Teeter. Mr. Silverstein has been hearing from a lot from people that their biggest challenge, in business, is labor. Getting people to show for work and keeping them. The Inn at Perry Cabin has rebranded itself as The Inn at Perry Cabin by Belmond. Hein Olckers, as the general manager, would like to work with schools and agencies to set up an apprentice program at his property, as Mr. Olckers intends to grow the property. The Talbot Chamber of Commerce is going to deliver a new program called "Choices," which is given to all 8th graders as an interactive program about the choices to

stay in school and try to stop the drop-out rate. **Mayor Willey, Town of Easton:** reported that Harris Teeter and BJ's Warehouse both have been approved by Town Council and are now awaiting the site plans. If the site plans do not come in soon, they will have to begin building in the spring of 2015. They have condemned 16 houses on the Hill Project and have asked code enforcement not to take them down so they may work on state and federal money to try some rehabilitation.

Construction work for a replacement of a natural gas line continues on South Street; they are to have work done by the Waterfowl Festival or all work stops. The town is working with Delmarva Power and Light for an easement for Rails to Trails spur line that goes across the north fork in the Tred Avon. North Broad Street has renovations on the sidewalks, curbs, gutters, utility lines, which is taking longer than expected. The Eastern Shore Land Conservancy's groundbreaking was last week. Last Friday they interviewed with Channel 47 News, and Easton was selected as the second most livable city in Maryland, based on safety, economic opportunities, and educational facilities.

Kelley Malone, Town of Easton: reported that they start work very soon on the next phase on the Rail Trail, which is referred to as the Mecklenburg phase. It will extend the trail another 2 miles to connect with St. Michaels Road. The Fairfield Inn & Suites has received approval for its first series of permits for grading. The Brant Circle project was postponed to August 21st at 1:00 pm because there are a lot of concerns regarding that particular piece of property. Ms. Malone spoke to the interest of increasing the eye-appeal and landscaping regarding the environment off the Northern Marlboro corridor. With Harris Teeter approaching, Acme has already begun plans for renovations. The Town of Easton Planning Commission has about 10-12 action items that they would like the planning staff to work on, and Marlboro Avenue is on their list. **Peter Dunbar, Town of Oxford:**

reported that the Oxford Museum is in process of retiring their \$200,000 mortgage in time for their anniversary. The town had a good meeting with the county and contractors regarding the project known as Oxford Gateway Park. This is a county park, with 80 acres of undeveloped land, which was deeded to the county for a passive park. AMT Engineering Firm, from Rockville, won the bidding. There were only two local bidders. **Debbie Renshaw, Town of St. Michaels:** reported that St. Michaels is very busy. Ms. Renshaw introduced Kimberly Weller, the new communications manager who is working on a new website for the town. The Bank of America building has been bought; uses have been discussed but there are no specific plans at this time. PNC Bank is under contract. Demolition has begun on the Poore Property, for those 15 new units of housing. A new gallery has come in under the name of Eden-Koru. St Michaels is trying to establish a pedestrian corridor on the sidewalks. The commissioners are going to settle on a 4.5 wide pedestrian corridor. If you own a restaurant and want tables outside, that will be allowed. The town of St. Michaels used to preclude town parks for weddings; however, since St. Michaels is a wedding destination, they have removed that restriction. Phase 5 is underway with street renovations. There are lots of people walking down the streets with bags in their hands! The Inn at Perry Cabin is going to put in a sidewalk that goes from their entrance to the Maritime Museum. The Planning Commission is trying to come up with a way to redirect bicycle traffic. St. Michaels has created two new committees; one to work on getting the utility lines buried and the other committee to create educational opportunities in order to bring people to St. Michaels during the off-season. They are working with Chesapeake College on this matter and they are very interested in the customer service course mentioned. **Gerry O'Mara, Agriculture:** reported that this year marks the 100th year for the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension Service. The role of the extension service is to take the information that comes from land grant universities from their research and

transmit it to every county in the country. **Timothy Jones, Chesapeake College:** reported that workforce training is one of the things that the college makes available, to help all of our business and community organizations. They have a successful program in Dorchester County, working in the hospitality industry with English as a second language. Regular fall classes begin in a couple of weeks and the college is offering accelerated classes online. The construction is still going on; right now, they are laying steel. The college is still looking for local workforce. The construction manager is working directly with Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (DLLR) to find additional employees. 15% – 20% of their workforce is local. They are in the middle of solicitation to bring a large-scale solar program to the campus. They want to put in a two mega-watt generation facility on campus. That is as far as you can go without being a regular utility. **Scott Warner, Mid-Shore Regional Council:** reminded the commission and towns that as they continue any discussions regarding Broadband's last mile, John McQuaid and Ed Vitalos are still available to assist them, at least until October. Mr. Warner urged everyone to utilize their services, with research, etc. The director reported that Mr. McQuaid and Mr. Vitalos provided a survey that the EDO will introduce to the CORE meeting next week, to use as they interview with businesses regarding their broadband use. Mr. Warner indicated that the EDC, EDO and EEDC have been very helpful with hotDesks; and now it is a matter of location as well as additional assistance from municipalities, government, and the private sector.

The director reported that unemployment is up from May, 6.1% and 1,154 people are looking for jobs. A total of 17,726 is the unemployment base. Mr. Bautz reported that on the table were some real estate statistics. Prices are up slightly; the absorption rate is down about 20%.

The next four commission meetings' locations and dates were discussed. September 4th is in Trappe; St. Michaels is in October; Oxford is in November and Easton is in December.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:56 a.m.

Economic Development Commission Meetings are held at 8:00 a.m. on the first Thursday of each month. The meetings are open to the public. The next meeting will be held on September 4th at The Talbot Bank, the Moore Building, 29349 Maple Avenue, Trappe, MD 21673, Upstairs Conference Room.

Strategic Networks Group/Questionnaire: <http://www.sngroup.com/Maryland>

Maryland Broadband Map <http://mdbroadbandmap.org>

Veterans Employment and Training Service <http://www.dol.gov/vets/vets-100.html>

Rural Maryland Council <http://rural.maryland.gov>

Connect America Fund <http://www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/connecting-america>

Maryland Upper Shore Transit (MUST Bus) www.mustbus.org

Revised Impact Fee Study

A public meeting was held in the Council Chambers on January 21st, 2014 to discuss revisions to the Impact Fee Study. Please click here for a copy of the revised document.

<http://www.town-eastonmd.com/TempMedia/Impact%20Fee%20Study%2021Jan14.pdf>

Aday Remus: Jason Broadwater's Development Tool: <https://adayremus.com>

To view the Proposal to Amend Nutrient Management Regulations, along with the Extension Bulletin to be incorporated by reference in the Maryland Nutrient Management Manual:

<http://mda.maryland.gov/Pages/Proposed-Regulations.aspx>

A fact sheet "AgBrief: Phosphorous Management Tool - An Overview of the Proposed Regulations" is also available online at:

http://mda.maryland.gov/Documents/ag_brief/AgBrief_PMT_092013.pdf

The Maryland Workforce Exchange and labor market information are available online at

<https://mwejobs.maryland.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx>.